Testimony of Gregory Lam, MD

Testimony by Manju Sankarappa, ED, Ohio Asian American Health Coalition

In Support of SCR 7

Health, Human Services and Medicare Committee

February 12, 2020

I am a cardiologist from Dublin, OH who has been practicing in Ohio for over 10 years. I would like to submit testimony in support of SCR 7. I am Manju Sankarappa, Executive Director of Ohio Asian American Health Coalition. Dr. Lam is on advisory committee of OAAHC. I would like to submit a testimony in support of SCR7.

Diabetes and cardiovascular disease run hand-in-hand, and diabetes is widely considered a contributing factor to not only heart attacks and congestive heart failure, but also leads to kidney failure and hemodialysis, blindness, amputations, and ultimately death.

In Ohio, diabetes is an epidemic with over 1 million Ohioans who have diabetes and an additional 300,000 who have diabetes but don’t even know it. Prediabetes is a condition that is a precursor to diabetes, and here in Ohio 700,000 people have prediabetes with an estimated 1.3 million who have prediabetes but aren’t aware of their condition. Thus, education and health screening are essential to preventing this growing public health crisis.

For Asian Americans diabetes is a particularly lethal because it occurs in this population earlier and without the typical identifying factors. Indeed, diabetes afflicts over half of the Asian American population but a vast majority of them are unaware of their diagnosis. This problem is further compounded by the fact that many physicians are unaware of the necessity to screen their Asian American patients at earlier timepoints, as recommended in 2017 by the American Diabetes Association’s Standard of Care Guidelines.

SCR 7 simply raises awareness of this health disparity for Asian Americans, and recommends diabetic screening at lower body weights (a body mass index of 23 instead of the standard 25). It has no mandate and imposes no financial burdens. The Screen at 23 initiative is supported by numerous scientific studies and endorsed by the American Diabetes Association as a Standard of Care for health professionals. Similar resolutions have been adopted by legislatures in California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Washington, and Illinois because it has the potential to save lives and save their state millions of dollars in health expenditures.

As a health care practitioner I witness first-hand the growing public health risk that diabetes presents. This bill would tremendously assist in our efforts to spread public awareness of this preventable disease and I urge you to consider approval of SCR 7.